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# EPA temporarily closes Rockton plant

By Michele Meyer 10-5  
The Register Star

ROCKTON — United Recovery Inc., a Rockton industrial-waste processing plant, has closed down temporarily at the order of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, IEPA's Bob Godare said Monday.

The EPA ordered United Recovery owner Earnest Brown to complete required permits and have emissions tested. The plant will be closed at least a month — until test results meet EPA standards — Godare said. The EPA cited the plant with three minor permit violations, he said.

The plant will probably be required to make several changes in its operation before reopening, said J. Maichle Bacon, Winnebago County director of environmental health. "Certainly that dryer operation is

going to have to change drastically," he said. Brown complained about the EPA.

"I have a permit — an air pollution permit — I've had it for years," he said. "They make the rules as they go along." Brown closed the plant Friday and will do as his attorney advises, he said.

"It (the closing) will cost Rockton and myself quite a lot," he said.

The village and IEPA are preventing him from doing them a favor, he said. "I'm cleaning up a mess and I didn't make it."

Brown bought the former Soterion Inc. plant of which he was formerly vice president about two years ago.

Neighbors say the plant emits a thick and smelly smoke, which they say causes the rashes, headaches, tightness and sinus troubles they suffer when the plant is burning oil waste.

"When it's not smoking, we feel good," said neighbor Pat Marx.

Shirley Altenberg says her son, Jim, has suffered severe sinus problems since the plant began processing. His headaches stopped suddenly in August — when he left Rockton for college, she said.

"If the problem is coming from the stacks, which we believe it was, (closing the plant) stops any potential bad effects in the area," Godare said.

Watts Avenue residents can only remember the luxury of opening their windows on a breezy day — they must close windows to keep out the smoke, Marx said. Most of the neighbors must buy drinking and cooking water or cart it from friends' homes, they said.

Five of 10 neighbors' wells have traces of

cancer-linked industrial solvents dichloroethane and trichloroethane, according to IEPA test results.

The chemicals may come from other factories in the area, said Ken Bardo, formerly of the IEPA. "All in all it's just as confusing as ever."

Regardless of who is at fault, the neighbors blame United Recovery.

"Obviously they don't care about us or anyone else or they would be trying to do what they could to help," Altenberg said.

Pat Marx feels little bitterness as of late. Monday, for the first day in months, she said she could look out at a clear sky without the sinking feeling that it will be hidden in smoggy clouds today.

"Closed operation" — I would like to see added the word 'permanently,'" she said.

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# Task Force Urges More Money For Hazardous Waste Checks

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Politicians should stop rhetoric on cleaning up toxic waste by putting more money into inspection of dumps and hazardous waste research, a state panel has been told.

"The time of making political hay of environmental problems should be over. It's time for solutions," said Charles Bartholomew, chairman of the Department of Civil Engineering at Bradley University.

Bartholomew was one of three witnesses who testified Monday before the Land Disposal Committee of the Illinois Hazardous Waste Task Force.

He told the panel that regulations governing disposal of toxic waste are based on "too little knowledge," in part because hazardous waste disposal is "an inexact science."

The task force is holding a series of hearings around the state and plans to issue a final report in December on a comprehensive approach to Illinois hazardous waste problem.

That problem has been highlighted in the past week by two government reports.

The U.S. General Accounting Office reported last week that 31 of 38 Illinois hazardous waste dumps checked last spring were not abiding by

federal regulations requiring monitoring of nearby groundwater.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency subsequently updated the numbers to 28 of 37 dumps not obeying the rules.

In its response to the report, the IEPA said it does not have the money to hire enough people to inspect dumps and to carry out the federal rules.

"The public expectation is great ... but the government funding is not commensurate," IEPA Director Richard Carlson said in an interview.

A report by the U.S. EPA said Illinois and the five other Great Lakes states produce more toxic wastes and contain more hazardous waste disposal sites than any other region of the United States.

The EPA report said 28 percent of the toxic waste disposed of in 1981 went into lagoons or pits located adjacent to plants generating the toxic material.

Thomas Johnson of the State Geological Survey Division testified that those "surface impoundments" may be "the sleeping giants in terms of potential for contamination."

Johnson said most lagoons are located without regard to geological conditions and potential for groundwater pollution, and many are built primarily with convenience and cost in mind.

"Consequently, the majority of impoundments containing liquid waste probably constitute a serious source of pollution for valuable groundwater resources," Johnson said in written testimony.

Johnson called preservation of groundwater essential. He said a 1977 IEPA study showed that 82 percent of rural Illinoisans, and 38 percent of the state's population, depended on groundwater as a drinking source.

Testimony also was given by John Rademacher of the Velsicol Chemical Corp. of Chicago, who discussed injection of hazardous waste into wells dug deep into the ground.

Rademacher described the operations of such a well at Velsicol's pesticide plant in Marshall. He said deep-well injection was the only safe and practical alternative for disposing of the salt produced in the firm's pesticide-making process.

The salt is contained in 100 million gallons of water each year that is pumped up to 3,000 feet underground, well below water tables, he said. Such wells cost about \$1 million, said Rademacher, vice president for environmental, health and regulatory affairs at Velsicol.

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# Let stand nuisance suit against Pioneer Processing

A nuisance suit filed against Pioneer Processing Company's proposed toxic waste dump will be allowed to continue in Circuit Court, Ottawa, according to a decision handed down Tuesday.

Circuit Judge Thomas Flood ruled against Pioneer's request to dismiss the suit filed in 1982 by the Illinois Attorney General's office and La Salle County State's Attorney's office.

The suit contends the proposed dump will pose a threat to public health and safety if it is opened on 177 acres of strip-mined land west of Naplate.

Judge Flood's decision Tuesday

refused to overturn his own July 25 ruling that the suit should continue. Flood ordered Pioneer to plead or answer the suit in 30 days.

The case is similar to a Wilsonville, Ill., lawsuit involving a toxic waste landfill. That downstate community fought five years before winning its legal battle forcing a waste handling firm to remove 83,000 barrels of chemical waste at a cost of \$24.5 million.

Eleven persons are named as defendants in the La Salle County case, alleging they should be stopped from opening the landfill before it develops into a Wilsonville situation with